



What to expect when your dog or cat is boarding...

Leaving your pet at a boarding facility can be a stressful event for both you and your pet! It is normal to worry about how your pet will be feeling in an environment away from home and without his or her “parents”. Sometimes, though, our busy schedules call for a little help in taking care of our much loved furry family members. We hope the information below can help put you at ease about leaving your pet with us, as well as inform you about what you can do to make little Fluffy or Fido’s stay a smoother transition for you both.

Doing Our Part:

It is important that boarded pets are kept in safe, sanitary kennels that can be disinfected. Dogs are housed in kennels of appropriate size, with ample room to move about and be comfortable and are given soft bedding to allow your pet to “get cozy”. Dogs are walked outside in a fenced area a minimum of three times daily for a little exercise and some individual TLC with our animal caretakers. For those dogs that like to play with others, the daycare option allows them to socialize with other dogs and exercise in our temperature-controlled play room.

Cats are kept in “kitty condos” which have open fronts but solid walls to prevent “arguments” with their neighbors. The condos also provide hiding places so cats can feel safe which is very important in a new environment. For those cats that enjoy a little exploration, each day they can be let out to explore the cat room, climb on the carpeted scratch posts, and bask in the sunny windows.

All pets are fed once to twice daily according to owner instructions. We are happy to feed any diet you provide. If no diet is provided by the owner, then we feed Hill’s Science Diet Adult Sensitive Stomach to dogs and Hill Science Diet Adult Optimal Care to cats. These are high quality diets that are easy to digest in an effort to minimize GI upset during your pet’s stay. We strongly recommend you bring your cat’s normal diet for us to feed during his/her stay because cats tend to be more sensitive to food changes.

Despite careful care and attention, boarding can still be a stressful time for your pet. He/she must adjust to a new routine as well as new sounds and smells. This can make your pet more susceptible to stress-related illness, such as GI upset and diarrhea or infections. For example, kennel cough is a contagious bronchitis that is well-known for its ability to spread easily between dogs in a boarding situation. While we require vaccinations for all animals staying at our hospital as a precaution, it is still possible for a pet to contract a contagious illness in a communal situation. Because we are also a veterinary hospital, your pet has ready access to a veterinarian should he or she become ill. Animal

caretakers are trained to watch for any potential problems such as poor appetite, lethargy, diarrhea, or other issues and will immediately notify the owner and a doctor should they have any concerns.

What You Can Do:

The best thing you can do to protect your pet's health in boarding situations is to comply with your veterinarian's preventive health care recommendations. This not only means making sure your pet's vaccines are up to date at least 1 week prior to boarding, but also keeping current with recommended physical exams and wellness screening bloodwork. This allows both you and our veterinarians to be aware of any potential problems that may need special attention or monitoring during your pet's stay. In addition, providing your pet's own food helps prevent digestive upset from sudden diet changes as well. Always inform River City staff members of any medical condition your pet may have (arthritis, allergies, heart murmurs, history of coughing, etc). Please also inform the hospital of any changes in your pet's condition that may have developed since his/her last physical examination at River City (changes in water consumption, vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, etc...).

If your pet takes medications, make sure they are clearly marked with their names, the type of medication, and the dosage. Labels that are damaged or smeared should be replaced. In addition, please inform the staff what time of day the medication is usually given, and why specifically the medication is being given.

Keeping your dog socialized and used to experiencing different situations also helps to reduce stress when it comes time for boarding. Visiting an area dog park a few times before his/her visit can help socialize and desensitize your dog in order to help make new situations rewarding instead of traumatizing.

Owners often wish to provide a special toy, blanket, or other item that "smells like home" for their dog. While this is understandable, there are some guidelines that should be considered. In any boarding situation, items are frequently moved from the cage to be cleaned or while the kennel itself is cleaned. It can sometimes be difficult to separate Shadow's pink blanket from Biscuit's pink and blue blanket, especially once they enter the laundry basket! Although it is your decision, we recommend that you not leave blankets or leashes with us, as these are the most common items to get mixed up. We also recommend not leaving any sentimental or special items and any items left for a pet should not be easily shredded, torn, or ingested in order to prevent intestinal upset or obstruction.

After returning home, pets often sleep more than usual for the first 24 hours and may have decreased appetite for 24-36 hours. Keep a watchful eye for any signs of stress-related illness, such as mild diarrhea. If your pet seems excessively lethargic, vomits, has moderate to severe diarrhea or does not seem to be back to normal within 24-36 hours after returning home, the best thing to do is consult with a veterinarian. A doctor can address any concerns you may have.

Being an informed owner helps make boarding a better experience for everyone! Feel free to call with any specific questions you may have about our boarding and daycare facilities, or any of the topics addressed above.